

Members

Sen. Connie Lawson, Chairperson
Sen. Vi Simpson
Rep. Mary Kay Budak
Rep. Vanessa Summers
Jim Freeland
Suzanne Draper
Keith Weedman
Dan Carmin
Margery Justice
James Payne
Mitch Roob



SELECT COMMITTEE ON REORGANIZATION OF CHILD SERVICES

LSA Staff:

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Karen Firestone, Fiscal Analyst for the Committee
Sarah Brooks, Fiscal Analyst for the Committee

Authority: P. L. 234-2005

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MEETING MINUTES¹

Meeting Date: September 14, 2005
Meeting Time: 2:00 P.M.
Meeting Place: State House, 200 W. Washington
St., Room 431
Meeting City: Indianapolis, Indiana
Meeting Number: 1

Members Present: Sen. Connie Lawson, Chairperson; Sen. Vi Simpson; Rep. Mary Kay Budak; Jim Freeland; Suzanne Draper; Keith Weedman; Dan Carmin, Margery Justice, James Payne.

Members Absent: Rep. Vanessa Summers, Mitch Roob.

Chairperson Lawson called the first meeting of the Select Committee on the Reorganization of Child Services ("Committee") to order at 2:00 P.M and asked the members of the Committee to introduce themselves. Senator Lawson then reviewed the charges for the Committee.

Department of Child Services Presentation

Introduction

Committee member James Payne, the director of the Department of Child Services ("Department"), distributed a Status Report (Exhibit #1) to the Committee members. Mr. Payne explained that the report was also given to the federal government and that it summarizes the structures of the Department and the Department's current initiatives.

¹ Exhibits and other materials referenced in these minutes can be inspected and copied in the Legislative Information Center in Room 230 of the State House in Indianapolis, Indiana. Requests for copies may be mailed to the Legislative Information Center, Legislative Services Agency, 200 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2789. A fee of \$0.15 per page and mailing costs will be charged for copies. These minutes are also available on the Internet at the General Assembly homepage. The URL address of the General Assembly homepage is <http://www.ai.org/legislative/>. No fee is charged for viewing, downloading, or printing minutes from the Internet.

Staffing

Mr. Payne discussed staffing at the Department. Mr. Payne reported that the Department has hired 73 new case managers since July and plans to hire 26 new case managers per month. Additionally, the first class of new case managers will graduate on September 26, 2005 and will then begin working in the field.

Senator Lawson asked Mr. Payne where the new case managers would be working. Mr. Payne answered that new employees would initially work in the counties that the Department has identified as having the most need and in Marion County, in order for the state to not be in violation of a consent decree.

Representative Budak asked Mr. Payne how the agency was addressing the needs of the Hispanic community. Mr. Payne answered that the Department was providing incentives for bilingual case managers and that the Department used interpreters when necessary.

Regionalization

Mr. Payne next discussed the regionalization initiative at the Department and distributed a map of the DCS Regions (Exhibit #2). After evaluating the structure of child services in Indiana, the Department created 18 regions. Each region coordinates services for the counties in the region and will develop relationships between the Department and each county and court system. Additionally, each region will have its own regional service council to assist in determining the region's service needs.

Senator Simpson asked Mr. Payne if there is a disparity in the caseloads for the different regions. Mr. Payne stated that there is a disparity in caseloads and a disparity in funding between the different regions. Mr. Payne also explained that different regions can have very different needs in terms of child services and the regional councils would best evaluate the needs of the individual regions.

Senator Lawson next asked Mr. Payne if the regional managers are consistent. Mr. Payne stated that the Department's director of field operations monitors and trains the regional managers to ensure consistency throughout the state.

Information Management System

Mr. Payne next stated that the Department's information management system was antiquated, did not meet federal standards, and lacked an accounting system. Mr. Payne further stated that the Department is making improvements to the system in order to meet federal standards and to make the system more user friendly.

Child Support

Mr. Payne next discussed the initiatives the Department is taking concerning child support. These initiatives include:

- (1) establishing paternity as early as possible by seeking a federal grant and by working with hospitals;
- (2) promoting medical support;
- (3) collecting and disbursing child support more efficiently; and
- (4) hiring additional staff to collect support.

Pitfalls

Mr. Payne also explained the Department has some challenges, including:

- (1) Department staff are scattered through state government;
- (2) the Department's attorneys, many of whom are on contract, are not managed well;

- (3) there is a shortage of available workspace for Department employees;
- (4) there is a shortage of professional support staff;
- (5) the Department's contracting is complicated and takes too long; and
- (6) the Department's training staff is currently overwhelmed.

County Budgets

_____ Mr. Payne and his staff explained that not every county has completed its child services budget. Mr. Payne agreed to make a presentation on budget issues at the next Committee meeting.

Senate Bill 529

K.C. Norwalk, attorney for the committee, reviewed a tentative outline of cleanup legislation as directed by Senate Bill 529 (2005) ("Exhibit 3").

Selection of Next Meeting Date

Senator Lawson scheduled the next meeting of the Committee for October 21, 2005, at 1:00 P.M. in Room 431 of the Statehouse.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 P.M.